

# TWINCITIES

LUXURY & FASHION

## \*the beauty issue

*We've dedicated this month's issue to you – to learning more about your skin and finding products that are sure to make you feel and look beautiful.*

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# CONTRIBUTORS



## ALEXIS WALSKO CONTRIBUTING FASHION EDITOR

Alexis swears by four-inch heels and has a flair for the fabulous life. She is the founder of Lola Red Public Relations and Marketing of Minneapolis, which serves clients from around the nation. In addition, she dishes up weekly style gossip via her online newsletter, *The Gossip*. "Someone once said that shopping is a matter of life or death. I am very disappointed in that attitude, because it is much, much more important than that!"



## CHRISTINA HOLM BEAUTY EDITOR

Christina believes that beauty is more than skin deep – but the skin is where it starts. Her philosophy is that the products you put on your body are just as important as what you put in your body. With a passion for skin care and a career as a marketing executive, Christina brings a fresh perspective to beauty articles and products in the Twin Cities. Christina is a graduate of the University of St. Thomas, where she honed her critical analysis skills, earning her an Emmy nomination for Best Documentary in the process. Christina lives and works in downtown Minneapolis.



## MERLE MINDA FREELANCE WRITER

Merle Minda is a Twin Cities writer and marketing consultant. Formerly president of Minda Associates, her own public relations agency, she became a senior executive at Fleishman Hillard P.R. when they acquired her company. Since 2002, Merle Minda has traveled extensively and published many feature articles on travel, food and decor, celebrity profiles and business.



## PAT EVANS FREELANCE WRITER

Pat Evans joined the KARE 11 News team in 1994 and has played many roles during his time here. Currently, co-hosts KARE OnLIVE, weekdays at 4 p.m. on television and online, with Diana Pierce. He also has spent much time in the weather department, and is considered a valuable part of our weather team. Most recently, Pat co-hosted KARE-11 Today. Pat earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science from the University of San Francisco. In his free time, Pat loves to walk the lakes of Minneapolis. More importantly, he enjoys being an active community volunteer.



## BRUCE GLEASON FREELANCE WRITER

Bruce Gleason is a musician, historian, freelance writer, model, and a professor of graduate music education at the University of St. Thomas. A former U.S. Army euphonium player, Dr. Gleason researches the history of cavalry music throughout the world, and on weekends performs with the doo-wop a cappella group, The Fairlanes. Presently building the mother of all garages, he feels that backhoe operating is his most marketable skill. He has collaborated with Michael Swanson on several projects including the co-authoring of *The Renaissance Man's Guide to Cooking and Life – Being a Man for All Seasons*.



## MICHAEL SWANSON FREELANCE WRITER

Michael Swanson is a St. Paul freelance writer. A northwest Minnesota farm kid, he has been a music scholar and ski patrolman, and is currently a public health researcher and MBA student. While living in the mountains of Colorado and traveling in Europe, he led the sporting life of skiing, rock climbing, and cycling. Exchanging orthopedic surgery for organics, he returned to Minnesota where he is studying cleantech development, and wine pairings for hotdish. He has collaborated with Bruce Gleason on several projects including the co-authoring of *The Renaissance Man's Guide to Cooking and Life – Being a Man for All Seasons*.



## ADAM MASLOSKI FREELANCE WRITER

Adam Masloski is a photographer, writer, outdoorsman, and fisherman. He calls Ely and the Northwoods home and would choose no other place to live. He has worked as a journalist and photographer for several publications including the St. Cloud Daily Times, Columbia Missourian, several Missouri based magazines including Mizzou Magazine, Illumination and Mizzou Magic, and most recently the Ely Timberjay. He is currently working on his master's from the University of Missouri-Columbia, the project being an examination of the outdoor experience. Upon completion he plans to stay and fish a while, take a walk in the woods with his dog, Echo the Beagador, and generally just enjoy life.







## \**Custom Shoes*

### JOHN LOBB, BESPOKE SHOES

**AS WE BRISKLY HEAD NORTH** several blocks from our accommodations at the Allerton Hotel on Chicago's Magnificent Mile toward our destination at The Drake, we brief ourselves about our appointment with the John Lobb representative. The cooler-than-normal April morning moves us along, but the emergence of the sun above the lake suggests that this will be a fine day for shoe shopping with the historic shoemaker on their five-city U.S. tour.

The professor begins, "As with clothing, it wasn't that long ago that all shoes and boots were individually made by a local cobbler to the size and specifications of individual customers. Today, while they aren't impossible to find, custom shoe and boot makers are certainly not on every street corner."

The lady comments, "Which would answer the question about flying into Chicago from the Twin Cities to meet with a shoemaker from London."

"It would seem. Was anyone able to do any research about shoemaking for our appointment?"

"A bit. It seems that there are different levels of custom-made footwear. The distinctions appear to be price, styling and the degree of customization offered by the maker – starting with simple special orders of color or leather change and moving on to a shoe made expressly for an individual."

"Well done. Any specifics?"

"I've found that terminology doesn't seem to be universal within the industry."

"Oh, this again."

"Ready-made shoes, as well as most made-to-measure shoes are built around pre-made lasts, which is the solid form around which a shoe is molded. With all of these, a customer can pick and choose from a variety of stylings, leathers, heels, etc. A few establishments however, make true bespoke shoes and start the process by building wooden lasts based on an individual's foot measurements."

"The cost is considerably higher with these?"

"Oui; beaucoup."

We pass by the Water Tower, maneuvering through the emerging crowds even though it isn't quite 9:00 a.m. Chicago shoppers, or perhaps their guests, like to get early starts it appears.

"There are a few establishments that fit somewhere in the middle. Ron Rider, the North American market manager for Romano Martegani tells me that in addition to special orders, they offer the option of adjusting standard lasts – and then letting the customer select leather, style, etc. – custom fit without the bespoke price. Heimie's Haberdashery in St. Paul by the way, will soon be offering Martegani custom service."

People are gathering around the Water Tower apparently for some kind of special exhibit, and the lady asks:

"Okay, what's the story with this Tower?"

"It's one of the few places in Chicago that survived the fire of '71."

"Well, lovely building it is but these people need to get over something that happened thirty-some years ago."

"Um, that's 1871."

"Even more so."

"It also seems that 'handmade' doesn't necessarily mean custom or bespoke. John Lobb, Edward Green, George Cleverly, Gaziano & Girling, J.M. Weston, Kiton, E. Vogel – all make handmade readymade shoes in addition to varying degrees of made-to-measure and/or bespoke."

At this point we're approaching the smooth limestone splendor of The Drake Hotel, which the professor points out was gushed over by *The Economist* in 1919 prior to the opening.

Upon entering, the lady remarks, "I think they would do the same today. This is painfully lovely. If we can't meet with the gentlemen from Lobb in London, I guess The Drake will have to do."

We agree, and speak with Marisha at the front desk who directs us to Room 714. While we had been initially given the name of a Lobb representative for our appointment, we hadn't expected that due to some itinerary changes, we would be meeting with Jonathan Hunter Lobb himself.

From the point we enter the suite, we realize that whatever we knew about the bespoke shoe business and customer service in general, we are now on a completely new footing (sorry) with Mr. Lobb. He first sees to our comfort by offering us a cup of tea over introductions, and then proceeds to show us styles





and leather swatches and then takes our foot measurements – every possible dimension – while explaining the history of the company and the process.

“The original John Lobb, my great-grandfather, learned cobbling as a Cornish farm boy and went on to receive several exhibition awards and finally a Royal Warrant as Bootmaker to Edward, Prince of Wales. Our customers since then have consisted of a veritable who’s who from royal, political, business, and artistic arenas as well as anybody who just wants the best fit and make in footwear.”

“It seems we keep good company.”

“When I return to England,” Mr. Lobb continues, while measuring and writing, “a last will be carved of maple, beech or hornbeam, and then the process moves through several craftspeople including the pattern cutter, who cuts patterns according to the selected style and last; the clicker, who cuts the leather according to the pattern; the closer, who sews the clicker’s pieces around the last; the maker, who adds the sole and heel to the upper; the socker, who covers the innersole; and then on to the tree maker who fits wooden shoe trees exactly for each individual pair of shoes, which will help maintain the shape of the shoes for years. Finally the product culminates with the polisher who brings the shoes to their final pristine glory. The process takes several months.”

By this point we have selected styles – a high oxford capped boot, and a spectator respectively. The latter is described in the 1939 John Lobb catalogue (these styles are still available) as “...an essential part of the wardrobe of the yachtsman or holiday-maker.” Done in willow brown and white suede, we can’t disagree. Suits of tweed, poplin or seersucker seem to be the next logical step.

“While we typically recommend a second fitting, we realize that this is not always possible. ”

“I think a second fitting in London is imperative,” counters the lady.

“Fortnum & Mason?”

“You found me out.”

“Thank you for at least feigning selflessness.”

After making financial arrangements, discussing a delivery date and bidding adieu to Mr. Lobb, we head downstairs for lunch at the Cape Cod Room.”

After being seated, the lady informs us, “I understand that Marilyn preferred the Lobster Thermidor here and that her carved initials are still evident in the bar.”

“We’re grateful that you insist on always bringing us back to reality.”

“It’s just who I am.” **BRUCE GLEASON & MICHAEL SWANSON**

Photography: Scott Demeranville

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